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REPORT

CD NO.

COUNTRY Poland
SUBJECT Transportation - Water, harbors
HOW PUBLISHED Monthly periodical
WHERE PUBLISHED Berlin (GDR)
DATE PUBLISHED May 1951
LANGUAGE German

DATE OF INFORMATION 1951

DATE DIST. 21 Apr 1952

NO. OF PAGES 2

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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SOURCE Der Verkehr, Vol V, No 5, 1951.

DEVELOPMENT OF POLISH HARBORS
AFTER WORLD WAR II

Jerzy Panski

After World War II, Poland had three large ports, Gdansk, Gdynia, and Szczecin, and three small ones, Ustka, Kolobrzeg, and Darlowo. The tasks of the ports, once more in operating condition, are not limited to the technical aspects of transshipping. Hand in hand with the reconstruction of the destroyed quay installations and warehouses went the reorganization of the port administration, since both the ports of ultimate destination for freight shipments, and the type of goods had changed. Transshipment in the port had to be effected more rapidly and at lower cost, and the time for loading and unloading ships had to be reduced in order to reduce the shipping costs per ton. The complicated servicing apparatus was reorganized and made a part of the planned economy of the country.

Between 1947 and 1949, the number of cranes in Gdansk-Gdynia increased threefold; in Szczecin it increased fivefold. The length of quay installations increased by 30 percent in Gdansk-Gdynia, and by 80 percent in Szczecin. The effective storage space of the warehouses was tripled in Gdansk-Gdynia and quadrupled in Szczecin.

As a result of the investment carried out under the Three-Year Plan, the joint port of Gdansk and Gdynia assumed the third place on the continent of Europe, and the port of Szczecin had a turnover of millions of tons of bulk freight, while also securing a corresponding position in the transshipping of piece goods, especially for the traffic on inland waters. Quantitatively, transshipping increased threefold during 1945-46, and in 1949 it had doubled the 1946 volume. The Port of Szczecin made especially rapid progress, increasing its transshipping sixfold during the Three-Year Plan.

- 1 -

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The tasks of the Three-Year Plan relative to ports, namely, reduction of transshipment costs and increasing the attractiveness of these ports to shippers, were achieved by the introduction of planned economy and by increasing labor efficiency through work competitions and streamlining.

Coal export, which constitutes the largest single transshipment item, was centralized in 1946 in the hands of a State Shipping and Transshipment Concern as a section of the Port Transshipment of the Coal Industry. An important economic success of that time was the organization of the freight business in Gdynia-Gdansk (both ports had just been consolidated into a joint port) which was taken over by the first state-owned shipping firm (Baltica). The first success was the concentration of the entire Scandinavian ore import into a single enterprise for Polish and Czech consignees, as the first sign of cooperation with states which are recipients of Polish transit traffic.

In 1948, labor competition in the ports took on the character of a mass movement, embracing 43 percent of all persons employed there. In 1949, the forms of labor competition were further expanded. In 1949, the average annual output in piece goods transshipping under labor competition was 12 tons an hour, as against 9.6 tons per hour in 1948. The total transshipping between ship and quay increased by 30 percent, while between ship and warehouse it increased by 40 percent.

Toward the end of the Three-Year Plan the time required for the transshipment of imported iron ore was cut to 60 percent of that prescribed by the transportation agreements. The Polish ports were thus able to set new transit tariffs based on their own reduced costs and to grant important preferential rebates for transit freight. In the smaller ports, Ustka, Kolobrzeg, and Darlowo, the destroyed quay and harbor installations were also rebuilt and placed in operation again, so that part of the bulk freight to be transshipped in boom times could be routed through them. A significant increase in traffic through these ports will occur only after the development of local industry, agricultural industry, and fisheries.

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- 2 -

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